

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 SEOUL 10101 220942Z
ACTION NODS-00

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1172

S E C R E T SEOUL 10101

NODIS

FOR HABIB FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, KS, US
SUBJECT: BLUE HOUSE BUGGING ISSUE

REF: STATE 308063

1. AS INSTRUCTED REFTEL, I INFORMED FOREIGN MINISTER PARK TONG-JIN THAT WE WILL NOT PROVIDE ANY WRITTEN STATEMENT AND THAT WE CONSIDER FORMER ORAL ASSURANCES GIVE AUTHORITATIVE USG ASSURANCES THAT THERE WAS NO BLUE HOUSE BUGGING. UNDER PERSISTENT PRODDING OF QUESTION BY FONMIN PARK, I STRESSED THAT THIS DECISION WAS FINAL, AS INSTRUCTED. PARK WAS MOST UNHAPPY AND INDICATED THAT "HIGHER AUTHORITY" WOULD LIKEWISE BE UNHAPPY. HE CONCLUDED CONVERSATION ON THIS POINT WITH ASSUMPTION THAT WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO CHANGE OUR VIEW, ALTHOUGH HE INDICATED AMBASSADOR HAHM MIGHT RAISE IT AGAIN IN WASHINGTON.

2. PARK ALSO ASKED AGAIN WHETHER THERE WAS ANY POSSIBILITY FOR COUNSELOR KIM TO SEE MINISTER KOO OUTSIDE STATE DEPARTMENT. I REITERATED THAT KIM WAS ADAMANT ON THIS POINT AND URGED HIM TO INSTRUCT HAHM TO ACCEPT MEETING AS PROPOSED BY KIM.

SECRET

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PAGE 02 SEOUL 10101 220942Z

3. FINALLY FONMIN SAID HE ANTICIPATES THAT THERE WILL BE KOREAN PRESS COVERAGE OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS, AS DO WE, AND THAT UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES THERE MAY BE SOME PROBLEMS. I URGED MOST STRONGLY THAT ROKG AVOID ANY SINSE OF CONFRONTATION WITH USG IN ITS HANDLING OF PRESS EXPOSURE OF

RECENT PROBLEMS. I POINTED OUT THAT USG IN ITS OFFICIAL STATEMENTS HAD TAKEN THIS POSITION AND HAD STRESSED CONTINUITY OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH KOREA.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH I HAVE IN ALL MY CONVERSATIONS URGED BALANCED, NON-CONFRONTATIONAL, PRESS COVERAGE IN KOREA ONCE RECENT DEVELOPMENTS ARE OFFICIALLY EXPOSED TO PUBLIC, WE ANTICIPATE THAT IT WILL ONLY BE NATURAL FOR ROKG TO PUT ITS BEST FOOT FORWARD AND PLACE US ON DEFENSIVE. UNDER CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES, I SUSPECT FONMIN WILL HAVE LITTLE LEVERAGE TO CONTROL SITUATION.
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